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December 31, 2005

To: Statewide Planning Office – Div of Program Development

Re: comments on draft Statewide Transportation Improvement Program

Juneau Access

The Juneau Road allocations should be zeroed out.

- We do not need this road. Citing access to the capital is a joke. Out-of-town folks who come to Juneau to work during the legislative session have always been able to put their vehicles on the ferry in Haines. Legislators, aides, lobbyists, and constituents are all more likely to fly rather than drive 20+ hours one way. Alaska Airlines even has a low cost Constituent fare.
- Virtually all of the Juneau residents who want to drive out-of-town want to do so merely for recreational driving. Not for medical emergencies. Not for the need to commute to work. To build a road to satisfy this kind of whim is not fair to the American taxpayer. Putting a private vehicle on the ferry to Haines or Skagway is not difficult. Nor is it expensive. Those who cite it as so have lost perspective. Traveling across the country in a covered wagon was difficult. Owning, maintaining, insuring and operating a vehicle is expensive.
- A majority of residents in the most affected communities oppose the road: clear majorities in Haines and Skagway.
- The road will irreparably degrade areas of great value to fish and wildlife as well as residents and tourists.
- The road would damage an area considered critical sea lion habitat by the National Marine Fisheries Service as well as the spawning grounds of the eulachon, an extremely nutritious forage fish that feeds tens of thousands of birds and many marine mammal species each spring.
- The Juneau Access Road would destroy opportunities for visitors and local residents to enjoy the beautiful roadless settings of Berners Bay and the 1.2 million-acre Skagway-Juneau Icefield Roadless Area. The road would also cross the mouth of the Katzeihin, a National Wild and Scenic River and mar one of the most spectacular portions of Alaska's famed Inside Passage.
- The Juneau Access Road would cut through the heart of Berners Bay an "*Aquatic Resource of National Importance*." Lands surrounding the Bay support numerous wildlife species, including bald eagles, moose, deer, bears, and mountain goats, while the bay itself is home to endangered humpback whales, orcas, salmon, harbor seals, and Steller sea lions.
- The road would certainly need to be closed periodically—leaving travelers with less predictability than under the current ferry regime.

- This project raises significant safety concerns. It would have one of the highest avalanche risks of any road in the entire country. Aren't the auto related death & accident statistics already bad enough? In the over 30 years of operation, there have been no safety-related deaths on board the Alaska's ferry system. Compare this with the fact that there are over 6 million car accidents on U.S. roads per year. Last year there were 2.9 million injuries. Over 42,000 people were killed.

Bridges

Allocations to these projects should be zeroed out.

The bridges to Gravina Island and Knik Arm are unnecessary. They cost too much and take money away from more essential transportation priorities.

To get to the Ketchikan airport couldn't be easier. The ferry is quick, reliable and cheap. I speak from experience as I am one of the few people in this state who has lived on Gravina Island.

Pollution

Highways that are built to sustain sprawl and encourage unnecessary driving add to our pollution and energy problems, and increase our dependence on an auto-centric way of life which is unhealthy, anti-social, and unsustainable. The government should be encouraging more public transit not less.

Carbon dioxide is the major contributor to global warming. Cars are the major source of CO2 emissions. Each gallon of gas burned puts 19 pounds of CO2 into the atmosphere. Over its lifetime, the average car emits about 50 tons. The US is the world's largest emitter of this pollutant. The government should be discouraging the use of cars. Especially RVs, many which get only 10 miles/gallon. The proposed Juneau Access road, Gravina Bridge and Knik Arm Bridge do the opposite.

As of today the National debt is **\$8,128,357,559,005.85** (source: US Dept of Treasury). In the time it took you to read this letter, it has gone up another \$10 million. To ignore this fact, to even *think* of adding the taxpayers with millions of dollars more debt for completely unnecessary projects is totally irresponsible. This fiscal policy of unmitigated - and seemingly intentional spending - is shameful.

Irene Alexakos
Box 727
Haines, AK 99827